

HEADFIRST

Newsletter / February 2021



NHF IS A PROUD ALLY TO THE 40 MILLION INDIVIDUALS WHO LIVE WITH HEADACHE DISORDERS AND MIGRAINE DISEASE

Your contributions help the National Headache Foundation continue to raise awareness, advocate for those experiencing headache disorders and migraine disease, and provide easy access to the resources and research our community needs.

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FEATURED ARTICLE #1:

Thank You, Caregivers!



February makes for an excellent time to show appreciation for the individuals in your life who go above and beyond. Embody the spirit of Valentine's Day all month long and spread a little extra love to caregivers.

This past October, the NHF recognized Dennis Rotondi as an inaugural [Headache Hero](#) in the Caregiver category. Dennis, a husband and father, has cared for his wife since 2007 while also juggling a full-time job and looking after their child. Dennis has even had to take family leave from his job during particularly difficult months for his wife's migraine disease. Throughout the last 15 years navigating the severity of this invisible illness, Dennis has learned to have more patience, empathy and adaptability.

We were incredibly moved and inspired by Dennis and his story, but there are countless other migraine caregivers who go above and beyond. We heard stories from parents, significant others, adult children, extended family, friends, and more who are committed allies for those with headache disorders and migraine disease. These heroes provide support for their loved ones every day.

On behalf of the NHF, thank you to the many caregivers for all you do!

[READ MORE ON HEADACHE HERO DENNIS ROTONDI](#)

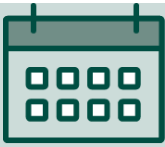
★ **FEATURED ARTICLE #2:**

Headache on the Hill

Headache on the Hill (HOH) is an annual advocacy event in Washington, D.C. organized by the Alliance for Headache Disorders Advocacy (AHDA), of which NHF is a proud member. With HOH, the AHDA represents nearly all 50 states and unites approximately 200 health professionals, migraine and cluster headache advocates, caregivers, and patients to present requests or "asks" of members of Congress. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 HOH participants will present their asks of Senators, Representatives, and their staff remotely via Zoom on Tuesday, March 23. These asks are typically focused on improving awareness about the impact of migraine disease and headache disorders on the American public, and the need for increased insurance and disability coverage, as well as research funding.

This year, NHF Executive Director Thomas Dabertin and Daniel King, Advocacy and Policy Associate, will be advocating as representatives of the state of Indiana.

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Mark Your Calendars: AQH Certification

From March 2 – 16, healthcare practitioners who can evaluate and manage headache patients, including physicians (M.D. and D.O.), physician assistants, advance practice nurses, dentists, and clinical psychologists will be taking the Added Qualification in Headache (AQH) exam. An AQH certification from the National Headache Foundation validates a healthcare professional's expertise in headache medicine. To see a list of professionals with AQH certification, please visit the [NHF's Healthcare Provider Finder](#).

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? DID YOU KNOW?



New research shows that headache disorders related to obesity are on the rise. Side effects typically associated with obesity are high blood pressure, increased risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, and migraine so severe that they can affect the patient's vision. Regular exercise, sleep and avoiding trigger foods are some suggestions doctors have for avoiding this type of headache. By incorporating lifestyle changes and with guidance from healthcare professionals, headache disorders related to obesity can be mitigated.

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IN THE NEWS

Another study of Fremanezumab has yielded promising results for those living with headache disorders and migraine disease. Patients who responded to the treatment reported less migraine days, less severe attacks on migraine days, minimal headache medication use and improved quality of life. Clinical trial respondents reported 5.4 less migraine days per month when the medication was administered.

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TIPS & TRICKS

Do you experience neck pain during migraine attacks? According to a recent study, 69% of people with migraine experience neck pain, and experts say neck pain is likely a symptom of migraine. That said, the best way to treat neck pain during a migraine attack is by treating the migraine itself, even if neck pain is more severe. Anti-nausea medication may also help relieve neck pain associated with migraine attacks.



[READ MORE](#)

Listen to [Heads UP](#), the National Headache Foundation's official weekly podcast where experts discuss a range of topics related to headache disorders. You can also now listen to Heads UP while on the go and on a variety of devices, as it's now available in the app store for iPhone, Google and Android.



Recent episodes include:

Episode 84: Meniere's Disease and Migraine

Episode 83: Certification of Added Qualification in Headache Medicine

Episode 31: Headache on the Hill

ASK THE EXPERTS

QUESTION:

I have frequent migraine attacks and my husband is not as helpful as I would like him to be. We have three children under the age of seven, so it is difficult for me to just shut

my bedroom door and turn off the lights. Do you have any tips or suggestions on how to provide care for people struggling with migraine?

ANSWER:

Managing migraine and an active young family is quite the challenge! Here are several strategies to help keep function at as high a level as possible:

- Build your own Team and become your strongest self-advocate.
- Knowledge is power. Educate yourself as much as possible about your particular type of migraine: episodic, chronic, aura or no aura, your symptoms of the three phases of migraine: prodrome, headache, postdrome and your triggers (if you can identify them).
- Learn about the many new medications that have just been released specifically for migraine.
- Communication with all Team members is critical. Team members include your husband (there are specific resources for caregivers), your family and the friends you feel you can rely on. It is important that everyone understands that migraine is NOT “just a headache”. It is a full body neurological illness which has many symptoms, such as aura, nausea, light sensitivity, feeling like you have the flu, fatigue, difficulty thinking, difficulty talking, brain fog as well as head pain. Your ability to function at your highest level is very impaired during a migraine attack. Do not feel guilty if you need to ask for help from friends and family.
- A good advocate teaches others about migraine disease; send your husband, family and friends relevant articles to read. Teach them to ask you what would be most helpful for you during an attack, such as help babysitting, bringing in a meal, help with errands.
- Practice good self-care and self-compassion.



Margot Andersen, MSW
NHF Board Member

- Keep well hydrated, work with your husband to establish turns sleeping through the night, engage in some exercise (low impact) daily if you can. A short walk with a stroller can be relaxing.
- Learn some relaxation techniques, like breathing skills, mindfulness, yoga.

Learn to find your voice to express what you need and speak up. Communication is the key to advocating for yourself. If medications are not effective, tell your doctor as there are many medications to try. Most of all, teach yourself what you need during an attack and be kind to yourself as you implement strategies to help you feel better. Learning how to take care of yourself is a journey and a Team effort.

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Each month we will feature your questions and our answers about headache disorders and migraine disease in the newsletter. If you have a question about migraine disease and headache disorders, please email us and keep an eye out for the answer from one of our doctors!

Email: info@headaches.org

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